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The Interpersonal Meaning of Engagement Resources in US Televised Presidential Debates

美国总统竞选电视辩论中介入资源的人际意义

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Abstract

In recent years, televised presidential debates play a more important role in American presidential campaign. In the debate, the final purpose of the candidate is to persuade more electorate to vote for him and win the election eventually. The candidate's ability to speak effectively in public and his ability to maintain the favorable interpersonal relationships in the debate are both powerful weapons in the fighting for presidency. The candidate makes full use of the debating language to manipulate the complicated interpersonal relationships in the debates and strive for being entrusted with the presidency. Therefore, in the unique political discourse of US televised presidential debates, both the debating language and the complicated interpersonal relationships deserve our attention.

The interpersonal meaning of language has aroused many linguists' interest and been interpreted from different linguistic angles. Halliday's research on interpersonal function in systemic functional grammar has been very influential, however it still needs improvement. Developed out of systemic functional grammar linguistics, the Appraisal Theory, concerns evaluative meaning by researching into interpersonal meaning across kinds of discourses (e.g. Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005). The Appraisal Theory highlights discourse analysis from the perspective of discourse semantics in terms of three broad domains—ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT and GRADUATION, which are closely related to each other and all contribute to the realization of interpersonal meaning. Due to the limited space, the thesis will only focus on the engagement resources of the appraisal system.

The modified theoretical framework for the present research is reconstructed by combining the engagement system with the functional theory of presidential campaign discourse proposed by Benoit. Under the modified theoretical framework, the present study tries to explore how the various engagement resources are employed to realize the interpersonal meaning in US televised presidential debates. To get a thorough and objective analysis, both qualitative and quantitative analytical methods are adopted in this study.

The study shows that interpersonal meanings can be realized by various

engagement resources in the US televised presidential debates. Both the contraction resources and the expansion resources are used as effective devices of establishing and maintaining the interpersonal relationship in the debate, however, the contraction resources are employed more often than the expansion resources. The uneven distribution of the engagement resources is compatible with the features of US televised presidential debate and the function of the engagement resources in realizing the interpersonal meaning.

Key words: US Televised Presidential Debate; Engagement Resources; Functional Theory of Presidential Campaign Discourse; Interpersonal Meaning

摘要

近几十年，电视辩论在四年一次的美国大选中扮演了重要的作用。在辩论中，候选人优秀的语言能力是获胜的基础；复杂的人际关系则是总统候选人所面临的首要问题。候选人怎样才能处理好与其他参与者(对手，听众和辩论主席)的关系是他们在辩论中达到最终目的的主要途径。语言作为社会人的有意识的活动有着很强的人际功能。总统辩论中，候选人正是通过语言来处理辩论中复杂的人际关系。因此，在总统辩论这一特殊的政治语篇中，候选人的语言和辩论中复杂的人际关系都值得我们的关注。

对于语言人际意义的研究，不同学者有着不同的观点。韩礼德系统功能语法中对人际功能的研究影响广泛，但他的研究存在一定的局限性。马丁(J. R. Martin)等人在韩礼德的基础上提出了评价理论(Appraisal Theory)，进一步发展了人际意义。评价理论主要研究说话人或作者如何运用评价语言表达自己的情感、对事件的判断和对事物的鉴赏，以及如何与听话人或读者进行潜在互动和感情移入，最终影响听话人或读者对事物的态度。它是一个级别层叠的系统，包括态度(Attitude)，介入(Engagement)和级差(Graduation)三个子系统和更多的下属子系统。这三个子系统都是语篇中人际意义得以体现的手段，由于篇幅和精力的限制，本论文只研究总统竞选辩论中介入资源的人际意义是如何实现的。

本文正是以评价理论的子系统——介入资源系统为理论基础，来研究总统竞选辩论这一特殊语篇中人际意义的实现，探讨这一语篇中候选人是如何通过语言协调好复杂的人际关系，从而实现自己在大选中胜出的目的。文章首先对总统辩论语篇，人际意义及评价理论进行了综述，然后对评价理论的子系统——介入资源系统进行了系统的讨论，并结合美国学者 Benoit, W. L.提出的总统竞选语篇的功能分析理论，整合出本文探讨人际意义的研究框架。在此理论框架的指导下，本文通过定量的研究方法得出了各类介入资源在三年的总统竞选辩论语篇所组成的小型语料库中所出现的频率，然后运用定性的分析方法具体分析各类介入资源在总统竞选辩论语篇中的人际意义。本研究旨在呈现介入资源在总统竞选电视辩论这一特殊的话语语料中的分布特点及其原因，并进一步揭示候选人在辩论中

是怎样运用介入资源实现人际互动的。

研究发现，各类介入资源在总统竞选电视辩论这一特殊的话语语料中的分布是不均衡地，总体上看，对话压缩资源的分布超过了对话扩展资源的分布，这种不均衡是由各类介入资源的在实现人际意义时的具体功能和总统电视辩论这一话语语料的语篇特点所决定的。辩论中候选人的首要目的是赢得选民的支持，候选人坚定的政治立场和明确的价值观取向就显得尤为重要。对话压缩资源通过压缩异己观点的对话空间，可以帮助候选人展现自己坚定的立场和明确的价值观，从而赢得更多的支持。对话扩张资源则通过扩展更大的对话空间，使候选人的说理和反驳避免绝对化而更具说服力。可见，对话扩张和对话压缩资源都是候选人实现当选目标的有效手段，只是两者作用的方式和角度不同。

关键词：美国总统竞选电视辩论；介入资源；总统竞选功能理论；人际意义

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